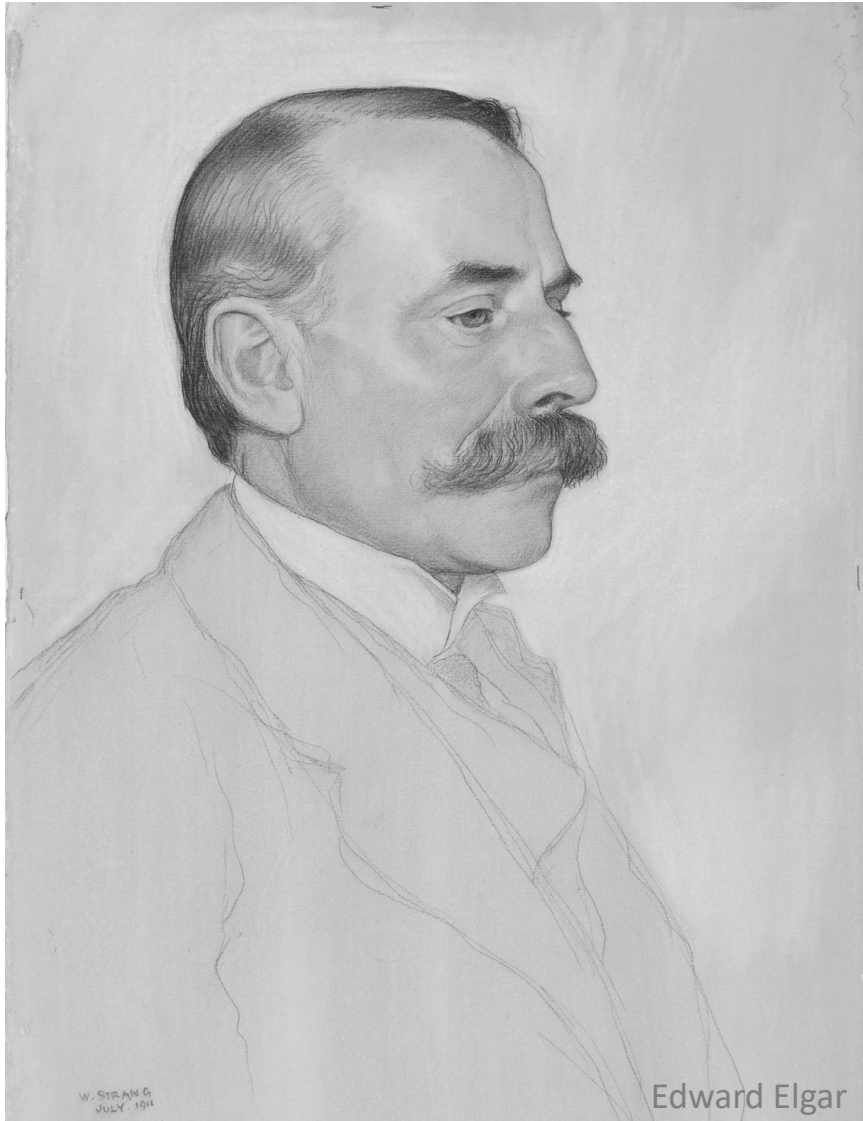


# TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES



## 9. THE SOUND OF A NATION'S SOUL November 15, 2023

## THE SOUND OF A NATION'S SOUL

ESSENTIALLY, THIS CLASS IS A CONCERT of 19th-century music: classical in the first hour, with more popular forms in the second. Britain was a country with a long history of supporting music; for most of the 19th century, however, its composers looked to German models rather than forming their own style. America, as a new country, had no such tradition, and its 19th-century history is largely one of developing a public that would appreciate and support the classics.

When dealing with the kinds of music that commanded a wider audience, it is possible to take the two countries together, for both enjoyed musical theater, and both had a particular fondness for parlor songs and sentimental ballads. But the same factors that originally isolated America as a classical country made it a rich breeding ground of folk traditions—whether from the British Isles, Africa, or Latin America—and these would combine to make the country's unique contribution to world music: jazz. *rb.*

### A. LANDS WITHOUT MUSIC

German writers called England "a land without music." We look to see whether the slur was justified and, if so, how the country eventually pulled out of it.

**Field:** *Andante inédit* (1835), Marc-André Hamelin

**Bennett:** *Symphony in G Minor* (1864), opening  
with Percy: *Loch Leven and Glencoe* (1874)

**Stanford:** motet, *Beati quorum via* (1888), Voces 8

**Elgar:** *Enigma Variations* (1899), selections  
from the 1968 ballet by Sir Frederick Ashton

### B. THE AMERICAN MUSICIAN

Nineteenth-century American musicians seem to have developed as virtuosi earlier than they did as composers. We shall sample three

mid-century works which rely heavily on the wow factor, bookended by two sensitive string pieces from late in the century that can easily hold their own against European comparisons.

**Beach:** *Romance for violin and piano* (1893), opening  
Noah Bendix-Balgley (*violin*), Ohad Ben-Ari (*piano*)

**Billings:** *Creation* (1794), hymn and fuguing tune  
His Majestie's Clerkes; Paul Hillier, *director*

**Gottschalk:** *The Banjo* (1853), Cyprien Katsaris

**Fry:** *Niagara Symphony* (1854), excerpt  
with Church: *Niagara* (1857, Boston MFA)

**Bristow:** *Arcadian Symphony* (1872), Indian War Dance  
with Catlin: *Bear Dance*

**Herbert:** *Cello Concerto #2* (1894), opening  
Amanda Forsyth with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

## C. THEATER AND PARLOR

Even people in both countries would not go to classical concerts might nonetheless enjoy music bought as sheet music and sung around the piano, or heard on special outings to the theater.

**Herbert:** *Babes in Toyland* (1903), March of the Toy Soldiers  
Disney film, 1961

**Gilbert and Sullivan:** *The Gondoliers* (1899), Don Alhambra  
Richard McMillan, in a production from Stratford, Ontario

**Balfe:** *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), “I dreamt that I dwelt”  
Claudia Boyle with the Point Ensemble, Mourne, Northern Ireland

**Foster:** “I dream of Jeanie with the light brown hair”  
Tom Roush, *voice and video*

**Foster:** Plantation Medley (instrumental)

## D. FROM FOLK ROOTS

A revival of interest in folk music was a key factor in the British musical renaissance that occurred around 1900. But the folk songs that early emigrants had brought over to America and passed orally from one generation to the next preserved a much more spontaneous tradition that, with the additional infusion of African American music, would eventually lead to jazz.

**English traditional:** *High Germany*

**Vaughan Williams:** *Folk Songs from Somerset* (1923), excerpt

**English traditional:** *Barbara Allen* (opening), Andreas Scholl

**Appalachian traditional:** *Barbara Allen* (opening), Jean Ritchie

**Video:** *The Origin of Bluegrass* (opening), Logan Hand

**American traditional:** *Roll, Jordan, roll*  
film clip from *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013)

**Tuba Skinny:** *Jubilee Stomp*  
traditional New Orleans-style jazz

Frederick **Ashton** (1904–88, *English choreographer*), Michael **Balfe** (1808–70, *Irish composer*), Amy **Beach** (1867–1944, *American composer*), William Sterndale **Bennett** (1816–75, *English composer*), William **Billings** (1746–1800, *American composer*), George Frederick **Bristow** (1825–1898, *American composer*), George **Catlin** (1796–1872, *American painter*), Frederick Edwin **Church** (1826–1900, *American painter*), Antonin **Dvorak** (1841–1904, *Czech composer*), Thomas **Eakins** (1844–1916, *American painter*), Edward **Elgar** (1857–1934, *English composer*), John **Field** (1782–1837, *Irish composer*), Stephen C. **Foster** (1826–64, *American composer*), William Henry **Fry** (1813–64, *American composer*), William Schwenk **Gilbert** (1813–1911, *English writer*), Louis Moreau **Gottschalk** (1829–69, *American composer*), Victor **Herbert** (1859–1924, *American composer*), Felix **Mendelssohn** (1809–47, *German composer*), Sidney Richard **Percy** (1821–86, *English painter*), Charles Villiers **Stanford** (1852–1924, *Irish composer*), Arthur Seymour **Sullivan** (1842–1900, *English composer*), Ralph **Vaughan Williams** (1872–1958, *English composer*)

The course website is [www.brunyate.com/britain-america](http://www.brunyate.com/britain-america)  
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